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THOMAS DERVINDS CIA-SPONSORED LITERACY PROJECT IN COSTA RICA

But Ex-Socialist Head Denies
He Knew Source of Funds

By STEPHEN V. RIESENBERG

Associated Press, the former Marxist Party leader, a 62-year-old man, yesterday, a program under which Latin-American politicians of the democratic left were trained largely at the expense of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Thomas was chairman of the Institute of International Labor Research, which ran schools in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic and a publishing house in Mexico between 1957 and 1963.

J. M. Kaplan, former president of the Welch Grape Juice Company, disclosed last week that the foundation bearing his name had channeled about \$1-million in CIA funds to the institute. Neither Mr. Thomas nor anyone else connected with the institute knew the source of the funds, Mr. Kaplan said.

The J. M. Kaplan Fund was identified as a conduit for CIA funds during a Congressional investigation in 1964.

What We Did Was Good Work

"I'm not ashamed of what we did," Mr. Thomas, now 62 years old, said in a telephone interview. "What we did was good work, and no one ever tried to tell us what to do. I am ashamed we swallowed this CIA business, though. If I had a choice I would never have accepted CIA support. That would have let them crush the project at any minute or made us persona non grata in the countries we were working with."

Mr. Thomas said he had "heard rumors" that the money came from the CIA, but "they were always denied when I asked Mr. Kaplan about them." "I ought to have been more curious," he said. "I'm not trying to save myself from justified criticism. I ought to have known, but I didn't."

Mr. Thomas said the institute was the "brainchild" of Sacha Volman, a naturalized citizen from Rumania who had once worked for Radio Free Europe and had spent more than seven years in Nazi and Russian concentration camps.

"Volman came to the conclusion that nothing was being done successfully in Latin America to find an alternative to the Communists or the military oligarchies," Mr. Thomas said.

Organized 17 Parties
Mr. Volman then organized what was to administer the 17 left-of-center political participation project in the field.

Justice Douglas said yesterday he was unaware that the school in San Jose, Costa Rica, had received most of its funds from the CIA. The institute was formed in 1957 to provide the literacy project and the funds, and Mr. Volman became center's training school director of the school, which was called the Institute of Political Education.

Funds were scarce in Costa Rica so hide out for several days, and Mr. Volman, director of the school, from the CIA, "had to go to Mexico," Mr. Thomas said. According to Mr. Thomas, "The first grant of \$100,000 was not CIA money. Shortly after that, he told me, 'The CIA bunch was overthrown by a military coup in 1963.' Mr. Volman had

been among the most prominent

democratic leftists in Latin America since World War II.

Moved to Santo Domingo

The school left Costa Rica in 1963 when the Kaplan Fund said it could not contribute directly to political parties—which controlled the school—and retain its tax-exempt status.

The faculty also included Juan Bosch, later president of the Dominican Republic, and Jose Figueres, former president of Costa Rica. The two men have been among the most prominent

democratic leftists in Latin America since World War II.

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The school was moved to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, where Mr. Bosch had become president. It was reorganized as the Inter-American Center of Economic and Social Studies. In addition to its classes, the center also conducted the first economic survey of the Dominican Republic.

The Institute of International Labor Research also started a publishing operation in Mexico under Victor Alco, a writer on Latin American affairs. It published scientific textbooks and training manuals for use in the school and throughout Latin America. The proceeds helped defray the costs of the school in Santo Domingo, according to Mr. Thomas's adviser.

Produced Literacy Films

In another enterprise the center, known as C.I.D.E.S., joined with the Parvin Foundation of Santa Barbara, Calif., and the National Association of Broadcasters to produce films to teach literacy to the Dominicans. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a board mem-

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